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By KW NARA Date 7-17-03

NOTES ON NSC MEETING 14 FEBRUARY 1969

10:40 Helms Briefing

Soviets at cross roads - new decisions can now be made.

Their objective meaningful deterrent - overcome earlier political and psychological disadvantage.

SS-9 bigger, more accurate than SS-11.

a. Defense: 64 ABM launchers.

b. R&D - many projects at or near decision stage. On Tallinn - majority believe it is air defense; some believe with different radars could be made into ABM.

Soviets have limited number of near term reactions. Resources are scarce. They are long way from coping with our attack forces.

Defense. Moscow defense began in 1963. They cut from 124 to 64 because it couldn't cope with our capabilities. Improved ABM possible between 1973-1975, based on telemetry. Would protect important target area, not nation-wide = estimate.

Soviets still have problem with low altitude bomber attacks. Costly

Offense.

a. 35-50 SLBMs by mid 1970s.

b. ICBM - 1100-1500 goal for next 10 years.

c. We estimate they will MIRV, MRV. They recently tested a MRV.

d. Flight tests of FOBS, depressed ICBM.

e. Mobile land ICBM. We look for mobile IR, MR, I-CBMs.

Nixon: Do we have mobile systems?

McConnel: We don't need it.

Nixon: They started ABM in 63, no mobile. Are they more imaginative and bold in new weapon systems? Do they start, we follow? We don't want to get in that syndrome.

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McConnel: European mobile ICBM did not get by Congress.

Nixon: Do we get frozen in?

McConnel: We improve existing systems, not build new ones.

Nixon: We are always fighting last war. If mobile missile is good, why not build it?

Laird: I was part of a group that turned it down. I thought Polaris concept was better rather than dependence on NATO.

Nixon: They have big ones mobile.

Laird: In late 1950s we tried this but went with other systems.

Nixon: Packard, you've talked to intellectuals, do you worry about their advances?

Packard: Our technology is better than theirs. Soviets have begun to increase in 3-4 years, we have not. Our MM at 1000, our SLBMS, our bombers are effective. We're in fairly good shape. We could make many alternative moves. e.g., Sentinel, would cost money, but would protect against Soviets. We are improving missiles. But Soviets started with SS-9 and can destroy our MM silos. Yet we can't destroy their silos. We don't have first strike capability.

Kissinger: We don't either.

Nixon: My point is fundamental, philosophical. Goes back to Sputnik. Freezing in, failure to experiment, move on. Breakthroughs are immense, political and psychological value. Are we moving forward adequately?

Packard: Our knowledge here is good enough. Uncertainty is if they have new idea, we don't, ball game could change. Our problem is that Soviets are producing twice as many scientists. Red Chinese are producing 4 times as many scientists.

Laird: Can't cut back R&D.

Nixon: We're oriented toward social sciences. They may be doing more exciting breakthroughs.

Helms: Their work is exciting in aerodynamics for air defense aircraft.

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Laird: We haven't been able to spend like the Soviets have because of war effort. They put in \$1.5 billion (I think \$3 billion), force U.S. to spend \$30 billion. They are outspending us \$4/3.4 - 1 on defense; 3-2 on offensive weapons and its such a great effort for them. They want talks because this is hurting them: 7-1 effort ratio.

HAK: Our SS-9, a counterforce weapon, if they get enough. While ours can't take out their silos, can't expend our force.

McConnel: We need a heavier weapon.

Smith: We aren't in such a lagging position. We have led in MIRVs, SLBMs, photo-reconnaissance.

Nixon: They are one jump ahead of us.

McConnel: That's right.

Laird: I'm surprised that they are going ahead with mobile missiles.

Lincoln: They don't have effective first strike.

McConnel: Question is warning. If we wait, don't use positive warning, they can develop first strike. . .

Nixon: Really relates to the aggressiveness of their foreign policy. Kennedy saw 5-1 in 1962, had confidence. We can't do this today. Our concern is with their confidence, what do they think we have. We may have reached a balance of terror.

HAK: This is a new situation.

Nixon: Yes

HAK: Packard, what would sensible leader be thinking of when they do things different from us?

Packard: We're trying to estimate their possibilities.

Rogers: Henry, won't they be looking for a breakthrough?

Nixon: This obsession with success could turn out to be an acute danger. We've tended to underestimate them. They get frozen in, we think, we're bound to stay ahead. Packard, aren't we far ahead?

Packard: Yes, only need for a little concern. We're in no serious danger.

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Nixon: You're watching it all the time?

Roger: Are we learning anything in Vietnam?

Laird: Medicine.

Lincoln: Political factors.

Nixon: Our philosophy is not to strike first. Maybe we don't need it.

Packard: Neither side can get a first strike capability. You lose more in a first strike than in a second strike.

McConnell: There's no advantage to putting missile in a space ship.

Agnew: Is defense cheaper than offensive?

Laird: No.

Agnew: Then won't they do it cheaper. Which costs the most.

Packard: Either side can offset other's actions.

McConnell: We assume no warning in our plans because this is the worst case.

HAK: Soviet planner will have a different worst case, that we do launch on warning.

It's difficult to believe either side will launch everything. More likely to be limited.

McConnell: Probability of our destruction 25% greater if we attack on warning.

Nixon: 25% as against all that devastation.

We have to look at decisions their fellow has to make. No matter what they do, they lose their cities. That's the important point. What a decision to make.

HAK: Each side looks at its own worst case.

Nixon: We have to do this. Isn't this traditional?

McConnell: Yes

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HAK: Might not start with strike on U.S. Their assured destruction edge affects their willingness to be aggressive. Relationship of this new situation to local aggression is the important point.

Nixon: They have shifted their emphasis. They used to know American President might react. But not now.

HAK: Prompt effects only part of the story. Much more. Decisions are very hard to make. This might mean smaller packages will be used to avoid going to larger one.

Nixon: Flexible response is baloney. They have possibility of conventional option, greater numbers. We remember our massive retaliation, gave us freedom to act. This has changed. In Europe, we may have to face up to a drastic increase in our conventional capability.

Rogers: Henry's point is the in-between ground.

Lincoln: No clear fire break.

Nixon: Don't we have to reevaluate this because of enormous destructive power.

HAK: Europeans don't realize American nuclear umbrella depended on first strike. No longer true. Need review of strategic doctrine.

Laird: We don't have flexible response because of drawdowns.

Nixon: Nuclear umbrella no longer there. Our bargaining position has shifted. We must face facts.

Helms: No signs of a new long range bomber - force will decline in numbers.

China - ICBM program seems to be running into snags. If testing starts this year, earliest is late 1972, probably 2 or 3 years later.

Submarines unlikely.

Weapons which could reach U.S. are three to four years away.

McConnell: Then small in number.

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Smith thinks Arms Control will save a lot of money.

Nixon: (1) Can we accelerate strategic time table on your study?
Say three months? We will need it for negotiations.

Packard: Yes, but interactions with GPF are more complex.

Nixon: Let's do that.

(2) On ABM, what is our present posture?

Laird: We're going through budget review. I think we can cut back the program by \$200 million, move some of the sites away from the cities, but we should go forward. Don't use it against Soviet Union except for sub launches and misfires. Say it is to take out 20-25 Chinese ICBMs in a few years.

Nixon: What is going forward buy us technically.

Packard: Thin system is adequate against China. Next step is a heavy system of spints around the cities, but is is a brute force system. We shouldn't do it under any condition unless we get into an unstoppable race. (Perhaps some protection with non-nuclear warheads.)

Nixon: What is Soviet emphasis?

Helms: They're stopped around Moscow but continuing with experiments. Could upgrade Talinn.

Laird: MM could be upgraded to an ABM.

Nixon: When on ABM.

Laird: 17 March we have to go up.

Nixon: We should have an ABM meeting before Laird goes to VN. Line is we're reviewing all of our defense systems, going ahead with R&D, we intend to ask for it.

Rogers: On SALT, delay can be made 2-3 months, beyond that we will be hard pressed to resist pressures.

Nixon: We should get our ducks in a row. Three months from now we should be ready. In meantime maybe we can make progress in other fields.

HAK: Option that we may not have talks should be left open.

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Nixon: We would be foolish not to explain possibility of getting something going in other fields. Shouldn't just react.

Rogers: Isn't easy to find out what other admin represented to the other side. Rostow gave them a paper, but we can't get a copy of it.

Nixon not content.